

Boston. Aug 21. 1837.

To The Female A. S. Society,

Dear Friends

I am directed by the Board of the Boston Female A. S. Society ^{to address you at this time} for the purpose of assuring you that though the love of some of those who have been hitherto esteemed as the firm supporters of the A. S. cause, seems to be waning cold, & ~~these~~ though some who have put their hands to the plough seem to be looking back and though the hearts of many appear failing them for fear, yet it is not so with us. In times like these, it is highly desirable that all who hold the Abolition faith "undimmed & pure" should ~~pay~~ declare their assurance to others, that the efforts of those who seek to divide the cause of truth may be discouraged, & the hopes of those who seek to strengthen it confirmed & ~~encouraged~~ established. Such being our motive, we do now in this moment of addressing you feel it to be our duty solemnly to renew our vows of consecration to the ~~cause~~ cause of the American slave, "our countryman in chains" our brother fallen among thieves" & to declare that the inconsistency, the fear & the timidity of others only supplies to us a new & urgent motive for labouring with ten fold zeal & devotedness. It is not the want of real Abolitionists to rebuke others for the exhibition of too great ~~zeal~~ & warmth & fervour; we therefore trust you will bear with us, if in this epistle, we should seem to utter the language of ad^{mi}n^{is}tration, or should appear to urge the adoption of our own views too warmly upon the ³ minds of others. As Abolitionists, we have all, I ~~suppose~~ ^{presume} been exposed in greater or less degrees to misrepresentation, contempt & persecution; by identifying ourselves in a measure with the oppressed & degraded we have, ^{been} exposed to a portion of the sufferings that have been heaped upon them; but at the present period we are called upon to meet reproach, not as Abolitionists merely, but as women. So corrupting is the influence that a pro slavery spirit exerts both on the intellect & on the heart, ~~many men~~ that in present age of the world, in the city of Boston men are not wanting who declare that those women who petition for the abolition of slavery, who form themselves into Societies to produce this result and who on every suitable occasion express their unfeigned condemnation of the sin of slaveholding and strive by facts & arguments to establish a similar conviction in the minds of others are sinning against the dictates of womanly decorum & propriety and rendering themselves obnoxious to the condemnation of the apostle as expressed in the 15th of the 5th chapter of Timothy. But this is not wonderful. The theologians who justify from the Scriptures the enslaving of a certain portion of their fellow men because of their colour are the very people whom we might naturally expect to find reverting the same sacred oracles in a manner almost

equally unjustifiable, to sanction the doctrine of woman's inferiority & subordination. The forcible illustrations employed by some of these self elected guardians of female manners would be amusing in the extreme were it not for the reflection that in so far as these doctrines are received just so far is a most unhappy & prejudicial influence exerted both on the mind & heart of the receiver. The man who looks upon woman, merely from the fact of her being such, as a creature dependant & subordinate, is cherishing a belief that in the very nature of things, cannot fail to exert a most baneful effect on his ^{own} character. To render his actions & his opinions consistent, believing women to be inferior, he must ever remember to address them as such; indeed in most cases no effort of the memory will be requisite, he will do so naturally & involuntarily. But with regard to this doctrine, a difference of opinion exists among women themselves, & while one class cheerfully acknowledges its own dependance & subordination, yet there is another class who while they cheerfully acknowledge & fulfil all the duties of their various domestic relations, are not at all prepared merely in virtue of their being women to declare themselves either subordinate to or dependant upon man. By the first class the vanity of man will be flattered & soothed by the latter it will be outraged and wounded and thus all his association with the female sex, the association ^{originally} designed by God for his moral improvement, must inevitably produce a result directly the reverse. The social intercourse that should exist between men & women as mutual teachers and aids is destroyed; destroyed however not by the fact of ~~women~~ a portion of womankind occupying a false position, but mankind remain in one. It may be said of women as was said of the West India Slaves "They are fit for emancipation but their Masters are not." The difficulty arises not because women are exercising their rights, but because men are trying to prevent them. To this fact there are many, many noble exceptions. Anti Slavery women should be the last to forget this. The men who are labouring in the cause of Human Rights are not unaware of the vast scope that those words embrace. As a class it will not be found that they are the people who are sorrowing over their oppressed dignity.

In this connexion it will not be inappropriate to express our views touching the course pursued by the Misses Grimké. We feel it to be both a duty & privilege to utter our convictions relative to their heroic & noble career. From personal experience we can testify that their eloquence devotedness & zeal in the cause of the slave is equalled only by their piety & deliverance ~~from~~ that ~~and more~~ accurate sense of all that constitutes truly feminine decorum. An attempt has been & is excessively ~~making~~ to injure the effect their ~~touching~~ thrilling appeals must ~~excite~~ ^{produce} on every Christian heart by endeavouring to substantiate the position that for a woman to address an assembly composed of men & women is ~~improper~~ and indecorous & wrong. We are almost unable to state what arguments are brought forward in support of this opinion, because its friends generally confine themselves to assertion and a rather common place

species of declamation. Our only guides in this matter must be the Bible & the dictates of common sense. Let us first refer to the Bible. St Paul in his Epistle to the Church at Corinth directs that women who were ignorant & uninformed should not interrupt the meetings of the church by asking questions. By a rather singular mode of interpretation this passage has been adduced as proving that the apostle commands all women, however well informed and capable of teaching never to attempt to do so, but under all possible circumstances to keep silence in public assemblies. Because ignorant women are forbidden to interrupt a meeting, does it therefore follow that well instructed ones also may not address a meeting of their own convening. Again St Paul in addressing Timothy says "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man." Does any one understand this command as literal? No, it is conceded that she may teach her own sex, that is supposing she addresses them by two or three in her own drawing room. She is only out of her sphere when she attempts to teach men. But is it improper to express her views on any subject whatever, we may suppose if we please, however, to one or two men in the parlour of her own home? No, I suppose would be the general answer. But if it should happen that on this point she is well informed & they are ignorant, & if she be willing to utter her opinions and they begin to be convinced by them, ah! the whole thing begins to assume a questionable shape. I am fearful that they are learning & she is teaching. Does any one say "this is absurd: St Paul's admonition was never designed to be thus supplied. It condemns only public teaching?" I reply "If we depart from the literal interpretation

I have as good authority for supposing that a woman may teach in a mixed assembly as my opponent may have for supposing that she may teach a half a dozen men & women in her own house. We can call to mind no other text that bears ^{opposed by} upon this subject. On the other hand we have good reason to suppose that women on the day of Pentecost spoke to an assembly composed of men from every nation under heaven. St Paul gives directions in what manner women should pray and prophesy, which directions would certainly seem to be somewhat unnecessary if they were to pray & prophesy at home merely. We are not made acquainted with the precise mode in which women "laboured" with Paul in the Gospel, but there exists no proof that it was not by teaching in mixed assemblies. There is no absurdity in supposing that the woman to whom not only Paul but "all the churches of the Gentiles gave thanks," the woman who was competent to instruct Apollo a man "eloquent & mighty in the scriptures" might not occasionally have pointed out the path of salvation even to promiscuous assemblies.

Let us now consult the dictates of our own reason. If an assembly of men are uninformed upon a point of great moral importance, is there necessarily any impropriety or indecency in the fact that a woman who possesses the requisite information should in all the simplicity & dignity of high & holy purpose declare it to them. Is any real modesty & decorum sacrificed in the procedure? Is it any but a false delicacy that is endangered. We allow that the delicacy which consists in a hearty adoption of the most frivolous forms of conventional life and the propriety which derives its very being from the false code of morals adopted by those who compose what is commonly called "good society" is very decidedly outraged by the conduct we have been defending. But we trust, we are

not now addressing women of this class. We trust that all who have
embraced the A. S. cause from Christian motives ^{will} feel that touching
this question they owe a responsibility not to man but to God alone.
And here we may well pause & consider how different are the views
with which ~~the~~ regards woman's sphere & duties from those which the general
ity of men entertain. While by man too frequently regarded as a being
whose chief object should be to subserve his enjoyment or convenience
of whose duties & responsibilities he is to be the judge, whose very final
accountability is almost merged in his, other & wisely differing is the
duty & the destiny her Creator appoints. Individually must she judge
of her duty, individually perform it & God has said that each one of
their own doings shall give account to him. Is it then wise to govern
our own views of duty by the opinions of others? Who are those who are
now opposing woman's influence as exerted in favour of the ~~Abolition~~
As a general thing ~~are they~~ not the men whose opposition to the cause of
the injured and outraged slave has ever been bitter & unrelenting.
Will you allow these men who have been for years unmindful of
their own most solemn duties to prescribe to you yours. Shall they
whose influence is given to a system that considers woman as goods &
chattel be esteemed by you as fit judges of the sphere you shall occupy?
I know that the sneering allusions, false representations & contemptuous
sarcasms to which we are subjected may be to some of us a bitter trial.
But if in view of these things our hearts fail us, let us look to the faith
& the view of the ~~petition~~ ^{sphere} that woman there occupies shall strengthen
us to endure. Woman labouring in the rice fields of Carolina &
in the burning sugar plantations of Louisiana, under the lash of a
driver is we perceive fearfully out of her sphere. Woman holding &
selling her fellow creatures as property, shameless by advertising runaway
in the public papers and trading in broken hearts & outraged affections
is we allow very much "out of her sphere." Woman, upholding by her
influence this system, pleading for its continuance, using all her influence
to palliate its guilt, and throwing obstacles in the way of emancipation,
appears to us also to be out of ~~the~~ ^{her} sphere, but with regard to those
women who labour for the extinction of slavery, who petition Congress
for its abolition, who urge the claims of the slave wherever an opportunity
presents, who in fine "feel for those in bonds as bound with them" of such
much we say they are in the very sphere to which God has appointed
every Christian, they are but fulfilling the apostolic injunction to do
good to all men as they have opportunity.

A few lines more and we will close a communication that we fear
is already too long. The path that Sarah & Angelina Grimké have
marked out for themselves is one in which they will probably
encounter much of suffering & persecution. As a society we are determined
as far as lies in our power to meet whatever awaits them.
We would adopt the sentiment of a devoted Abolitionist on another occasion
& say to these heroic women "When your reputation & motives & conduct is
assailed it is pleasant to us to put ours in the same peril." We wish
that this feeling may pervade the bosom of every female Abolitionist
in N. England. But it is far from our hearts to seek to influence
your mind unduly. If you cannot conscientiously support these views
we would not ask you to do so, but if we would earnestly & faithfully
entreat you to do more, far more, in those ways that do approve
themselves to your consciences than you ever yet have done.
By so doing you shall receive infinitely more in this present life.
I am respectfully & affectionately yours in behalf of